

In the Claims:

Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method in a computer system for exchanging economic data with a user, comprising:

receiving a request from a user for a first item of economic data, the first item including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data based on a first sample size;

retrieving the first item of economic data from a database;

providing over the Internet a web page for view by the user, the web page displaying the first item of economic data and an indication of the first sample size;

receiving a second item of economic data from the user over the Internet in exchange for the first item of economic data, the second item of economic data including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data;

checking the second item of economic data for validity or acceptability by determining whether the second item of economic data is consistent with economic data in the database of the same type as the second item of data; and

updating the database to include the second item of data if the second item of data is determined to be valid or acceptable; and

updating the first sample size to be a second sample size greater than the first sample size ~~providing the first item of economic data to the user free of charge.~~

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether the second item of economic data is consistent with the economic data in the database includes determining whether the second item falls within two standard deviations of a mean for data in the database averagable with the second item of data.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein receiving the second item of economic data includes receiving at least one of the user's geographic location, position, years of experience in the position, annual salary and annual bonus or incentive payment.

4-13. Canceled.

14. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium storing or transmitting instructions which, when implemented by a computer perform a method for exchanging economic data with a user, comprising:

receiving over a computer network a user request for a first item of economic data, the first item including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data based on a first sample size;

retrieving the first item of economic data from a database;

providing a display description for view by the user over the computer network, the display description including the first item of economic data and an indication of the first sample size;

receiving a second item of economic data from the user over the computer network, the second item of economic data including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data; and

checking the second item of economic data for validity or acceptability by determining whether the second item of economic data is consistent with economic data in the database of the same type as the second item of data; and

updating the database to include the second item of data if the second item of data is determined to be valid and updating the first sample size to be a second sample size greater than the first sample size.

~~at least reducing a fee due from the user for receiving the first item of economic data.~~

15. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising reducing a fee from the user for receiving the first item of economic data, wherein at least reducing a fee due from the user includes eliminating any fee due from the user for the first item of economic data.

16. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein providing the first item of economic data includes providing domestic and/or international wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data and/or employee benefit data.

17. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein receiving the second item of economic data from the user includes receiving economic data specific to the user.

18. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising ~~checking the second item of economic data for validity~~ providing the first item of economic data to the user free of charge.

19. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising checking the second item of economic data for validity by determining whether a numerical value of the second item is within two standard deviations of a mean for data in the database of the same type as the second item of economic data and averagable with the second item of economic data.

20. Canceled.

21. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein the request is a first request and wherein the method further comprises:

receiving over the computer network a second user request for economic data;
retrieving the economic data from the database in response to a second request from the user after the database has been updated to include the second item of economic data; and

displaying the economic data to the user over the computer network, the economic data being based at least in part on the second item of economic data in the database.

22. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein the first item of economic data can be averaged from a plurality of data sources, and wherein the method further includes receiving a request that the data be based on a selected subset of the plurality of data sources.

23-25. Canceled.

26-46. Previously canceled.

47. (Currently Amended) A method in a computer system for updating a database with economic data provided by a user over the Internet, the method comprising:

providing a database accessible to users over the Internet, the database having economic data including wage data, cost of living data, and/or employee benefit data based on a first sample size;

responding to a first request for economic data by retrieving first output data from the database, providing the first output data over the Internet and indicating over the Internet the first sample size;

receiving input data over the Internet, the input data including wage data, cost of living data, and/or employee benefit data;

updating the database to include the input data received over the Internet and updating the first sample size to be a second sample size greater than the first sample size;

receiving a second request for economic data over the Internet;

retrieving second output data from the database and providing the second output data over the Internet in response to the second request, the second output data being based at least in part on the input data received over the Internet; and

indicating over the Internet that the sample size on which the second output data is based is the second sample size.

48. (Original) The method of claim 47 further comprising at least reducing a fee for the first output data in response to receiving input data.

49. (Original) The method of claim 47, further comprising determining whether the input data are consistent with data in the database by determining whether the input data are within two standard deviations of a mean for data in the database averagable with the input data.

50. Canceled

51. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50-47~~ wherein ~~identifying a plurality of databases~~ the database includes ~~identifying a first database containing data gathered by a governmental entity and identifying a second database containing data received from users over the Internet.~~

52. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50-47~~ wherein the first and second requests are received from a single user.

53. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50-47~~ wherein the first request is received from a first user and the second request is received from a second user.

54. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50-47~~, further comprising checking the input data for validity by determining whether the input data are consistent with economic data in the database of the same type as the input data.

55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50-47~~ wherein a single user receives the first output data and provides the input data over the Internet, and wherein the method further comprises:

assigning a first value to the economic data provided in response to the first request;

assigning a second value to the input data received over the Internet; and

calculating a fee due for the first output data by subtracting the second value from the first value.

56. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~50~~47 wherein a single user receives the first output data and provides the input data over the Internet, and wherein the method further comprises at least reducing a fee due from the single user for receiving the first output data.

57. (New) A computer system for exchanging economic data with a user, comprising

means for receiving over a computer network a user request for a first item of economic data, the first item including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data, based on a first sample size ;

means for retrieving the first item of economic data from a database;

means for providing a display description for view by the user over the computer network, the display description including the first item of economic data and an indication of the first sample size;

means for receiving a second item of economic data over the computer network, the second item of economic data including at least one of wage data, cost of living data, cost of labor data, and employee benefit data;

means for checking the second item of economic data for validity or acceptability by determining whether the second item of economic data is consistent with economic data in the database of the same type as the second item of data;

means for updating the database to include the second item of data if the second item of data is determined to be valid; and

means for updating the first sample size to be a second sample size greater than the first sample size.

58. (New) A computer system for updating a database with economic data provided by a user over a computer network, the method comprising:

means for providing a database accessible to users over the computer network, the database having economic data including wage data, cost of living data, and/or employee benefit data based on a first sample size;

means for responding to a first request for economic data by retrieving first output data from the database, providing the first output data over the Internet and indicating over the Internet the first sample size;

means for receiving input data over the Internet, the input data including wage data, cost of living data, and/or employee benefit data;

means for updating the database to include the input data received over the Internet and updating the first sample size to be a second sample size greater than the first sample size;

means for receiving a second request for economic data over the Internet;

means for retrieving second output data from the database and providing the second output data over the Internet in response to the second request, the second output data being based at least in part on the input data received over the Internet; and

means for indicating over the Internet that the sample size, on which the second output data is based, is the second sample size.